

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 3710

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TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, BL

SUBJ: JACK ANDERSON STORY ON BOLIVIA

REF: LA PAZ2974 AND PREVIOUS

1. JACK ANDERSON ARTICLE "WORLD CLOSING EYES TO TORTURE CHAMBER" PUBLISHED MAY 24 IN MIAMI HERALD CONTAINED CHARGES ON CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOLIVIA. FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S BACKGROUN THIS MESSAGE ATTEMPTS TO RELATE THE CHARGES IN THE ARTICLE WITH EVENTS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN BOLIVIA AND PROVIDE CONTEXT FOR THEM.

2. REVIEWING THE CHARGES A. "BANZER HAS SHUT DOWN A CHURCH RADIO STATION". THE STATION, RADIO PIO XII, WAS ONE OF FOUR RADIO STATIONS IN THE MINING AREAS SHUT DOWN IN JANUARY, A TIME OF POLITICAL TENSION. THE GOB HAS SINCE AGREED TO DISCUSS REOPENING OF THESE STATIONS. (SEE LA PAZ 271, 292 AND 531). B. THE GOB "KICKED OUT TWO ESTEEMED MISSIONARIES". THESE WOULD BE FR. ERIC AND GEORGE WHO WERE EXPELLED AFTER THE ISSUANCE OF "THE MASSACRE IN THE VALLEY", A PAMPHLET DEEMED A POLITICAL ATTACK ON THE GOB BY THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. (SEE LA PAZ 1960).

C. "BANZER SENT HIS BULLYBOY SECURITY MEN TO VISIT THE ARCHBISHOP OF LA PAZ AND THE BISHOP OF SANTA CRUZ". IN
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JANUARY, PLICE SPOTTED FR. ERIC IN THE STREET AND PURSUED

HIM TO EFFECT AN EXPULSION ORDER ISSUED FOR HIM IN DECEMBER.
FR. ERIC RAN TO THE ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE. THE POLICE ENTERED
AFTER HIM BUT THEY WITHDREW WHEN ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICIALS
CALLED THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. IN DECEMBER, POLICE CHECKED
THE BISHOP'S RESIDENCE IN SANTA CRUZ AND THE CHURCH OF
JESUS OF NAZARETH EVIDENTLY LOOKING FOR ONE OR MORE
FUGITIVES WANTED FOR QUESTIONING IN CONNECTION WITH AN
INVESTIGATION OF "SUBVERSION". (SEE LA PAZ 292).

D. "REPRESSION BEGAN AFTER PRIESTS ISSUED A BOLD REPORT ON
THE MASSACRE OF THE VALLEY". STRAINS IN CHURCH STATE
RELATIONS EXISTED PRIOR TO THE ISSUANCE OF THE PAMPHLET
"MASSACRE OF THE VALLEY". AS FOR THE "MASSACRE", IN JANUARY
1974 TROOPS WERE ATTEMPTING TO CLEAR CAMPESINOS FROM THE
MAIN COCHABAMBA TO SANTA CRUZ ROAD WHICH HAD BEEN UNDER
BLOCKADE FOR DAYS. THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IS STILL A
MATTER OF DEBATE. THE GOB IS OBVIOUSLY SENSITIVE TO TREATMENT
OF THIS EVENT SINCE ENEMIES OF THE REGIME HAVE CONSISTENTLY
SEIZED UPON THE ISSUE TO TRY TO MOBILIZE CAMPESINO OPPOSITION
TO THE REGIME AT HOME AND TO DENIGRATE BOLIVIA'S IMAGE ABROAD.

E. THERE ARE "MX POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA-
UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL PROFESSORS, MILITARY OFFICERS,
HOUSEWIVES, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, MINERS, JOURNALISTS, LAW-
YERS, DOCTORS, FACTORY WORKERS". PEOPLE FROM ALL OF THESE
CATEGORIES AND MORE HAVE BEEN IN JAIL AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.
SINCE JANUARY-FEBRUARY THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS
APPEARS TO HAVE DROPPED SIGNIFICANTLY. F. " A CATHOLIC
PRIEST WAS BROUGHT IN THE QUESTIONING AND BEATEN". THIS PROBABLY
REFERS TO THE BLOWS RECEIVED BY OBLATE PRIESTS WHEN RADIO
PIO XII WAS SHUT DOWN. G. " A GROUP OF MINE WORKERS ARE NOW
LIVING IN CELLS WITHOUT BEDS OR BLANKETS". THIS REFERS TO
THE LEADERS OF THE MINE WORKERS FEDERATION WHO HAVE SINCE
BEEN RELEASED FROM PRISON AND WHO HAVE RESUMED THEIR TRADE
UNION ACTIVITIES. (SEE LA PAZ 1663).

3. IN GENERAL THE TONE OF THE ANDERSON ARTICLE EXAGGERATES
THE DEGREE OF REPRESSION IN BOLIVIA AND IGNORES SIGNIFICANT
IMPROVEMENT EFFECTED IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS.

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